United Nations

Press Release

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General ends two-day official visit to Guinea-Bissau during which he meets President; to chair United Nations inter-agency meeting in Geneva.

- Iraq protests against proposed 30 per cent to be deducted from its oil earnings to pay for damages caused by its invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

- United Nations inter-agency team set up to assess humanitarian needs, to go to Ethiopia and neighbouring countries.

- General Assembly agrees to take up financing of observer mission in El Salvador.

- Speakers at thirty-eight session of United Nations Development Programme Governing Council see "ideological content" in Human Freedom Index of 1991 Human Development report.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar now on the last week of his three-week tour to Europe and Africa, has left Guinea-Bissau on his way to Geneva, where he will preside over a United Nations inter-agency meeting.

This morning the Secretary-General met again with the President of Guinea-Bissau, who briefed him on political reforms under way in the country, economic development and United Nations economic assistance.

Guinea-Bissau was the third West African nation on Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar's tour, following Guinea and Sierra Leone.

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Iraq has protested against the Secretary-General's proposal to deduct 30 per cent from its oil earnings to pay for damages caused by its invasion and occupation of Kuwait during the Gulf war.

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In accordance with Security Council resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April, setting the terms for the cease-fire, the Secretary-General has recommended to the Council that 30 per cent of Iraq's earnings stemming from its oil exports be transferred to a compensation fund to pay countries and nationals for losses during the conflict.

In a letter of 7 June to the Secretary-General, Iraq's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Abdul Amir Al-Anbari, said his country had, given the established facts of its economic situation, requested a grace period of five years. In spite of this, he said, the Secretary-General had used economic data and figures supposed to be attained in 1993 in order to assess what was due in 1991 and 1992.

The Iraqi Ambassador went on to say that the international community's economic embargo against Iraq remained comprehensive and severe. His country had reservations as to the Secretary-General's estimates for Iraq's annual requirements for civilian imports. Those requirements were estimated on the basis of data for 1989 -- a year of severe austerity due to the circumstances of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war. Iraq's normal civilian requirements were far in excess of that figure, he said.

In the light of all the facts, Iraq wished to reiterate its request for a five-year grace period, during which no sum should be deducted from its oil export earnings, the Ambassador said, adding that Iraq needed to address the major problems strangling its economy and threatening the Iraqi people with hunger and disease.

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A United Nations inter-agency team set up to assess immediate requirements for humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia and neighbouring countries, is scheduled to depart for the region tomorrow, a United Nations spokesman said today. Headed by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), James C. Ingram, the team is expected to stay in Ethiopia for one week.

The spokesman said representatives of a number of donor countries had met this morning with Virendra Dayal, Chef de Cabinet, to discuss "the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa". The meeting was requested by the five Nordic countries -- Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

In a related development, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) today issued an appeal for medicines for southern Ethiopia, on behalf of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The agency said there was currently only one functioning civilian hospital in Addis Ababa, run by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Other major hospitals had completely depleted their stocks of fluids,

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antibiotics, analgesics and wound dressings.

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The General Assembly this morning agreed to take up the question of financing the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). The Assembly, having resumed its forty-fifth session, also decided to allocate the issue to its Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary).

In an addendum to his report to the Assembly of 30 May, the Secretary-General recommended the appropriation of more than $30 million for 12 months of the force's operation, which would focus on the monitoring, investigation and promotion of human rights issues in El Salvador.

The Secretary-General had previously advised that the approval of his proposal for an early establishment of ONUSAL should not be linked to the success of the remaining negotiations agreed between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

He said that once there was agreement on the cease-fire, it was envisaged that the United Nations would be called upon to play a broader role towards the achievement of peace in the region. It was his intention, therefore, said the Secretary-General, to submit to the Assembly, at an appropriate time, a revised structure of ONUSAL, subject to Security Council approval.

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The publication of the Human Development Report 1991 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was praised by most speakers this morning, as the UNDP Governing Council began its discussion of the report of the Administrator for 1990 and of programme-level activities. Some speakers, however, said the inclusion of a Human Freedom Index in the Report introduced ideological content into UNDP operational activities.

Speakers also stressed the need for UNDP to concentrate its resources on country-level programmes and to keep its administrative budget to a minimum. The representatives of several donor countries said that development assistance budgets would most likely not increase in the next few years, and UNDP should concentrate on the effectiveness and efficiency of its field programmes.

This year's Report included for the first time a Human Freedom Index, which listed Sweden and Denmark as "most free" countries, enjoying 38 out of 40 "freedoms". Iraq ranked last on the list, enjoying none of the freedoms of the Index.

In his foreword to the Report, UNDP Administrator William H. Draper III said no measure of human development could ever be complete without the inclusion of a measurement of freedom.

The 40 key indicators of freedom assembled in the Index included multiparty elections, press freedoms, rule of law, right to travel and assembly, opportunities for gender and ethnic equality.

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